

Volunteer Advocate Job Description

TITLE:

Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA)

OBJECTIVE:

To advocate for the best interest of a child or sibling group who is brought into the court system due to abuse or neglect. CASAs are trained community volunteers appointed by the Knox County Juvenile Court Judge and his Magistrates who act as an official part of the judicial proceedings, working alongside attorneys and case managers. The CASA Volunteer Advocate handles one or two cases at a time and has time to thoroughly research the circumstances and history of each appointed case.

QUALIFICATIONS:

Volunteer Advocates shall be at least twenty-one years old, have basic computer skills, and shall successfully complete screening requirements, which include a written application, personal interview, and reference and criminal background investigations.

SUPERVISOR:

A CASA Volunteer Advocate will be assigned to the CASA Program Director or Casework Manager for the duration of the case.

RESPONSIBILITIES:

- Respects a child's inherent right to grow up with dignity in a safe environment that meets that child's best interests.
- Ensures that the child's best interests are represented at every stage of the case.
- Makes contact with the child, CASA supervisors and other parties involved in the case at least once a month and as needed.
- Reports any new incidents of child abuse and/or neglect to the CASA supervisor and the appropriate authorities.
- Reviews records and interviews appropriate parties involved in the case, including the child, to determine if a permanency plan has been created for the child and whether appropriate services, including reasonable efforts, are being provided to the child and family.
- Facilitates prompt, thorough reviews of the case.
- Attends all court hearings, foster care reviews and all other hearings and meetings which pertain to the child.
- Maintains complete and confidential records and documentation about the case, including appointments, interviews and information gathered about the child.
- Submits recommendations concerning the case to the court in a signed written report.
- Exhibits professionalism in behavior and appearance.
- Is not related to any parties involved in a case assigned to him/her or employed in a position and/or agency that might result in a conflict of interest.
- Does not provide direct services to any parties that could lead to a conflict of interest or potential liability, or cause a child or family to become dependent on the CASA volunteer for service that should be provided by other agencies or organizations.

TRAINING:

A CASA Volunteer Advocate completes a minimum of 33 hours of initial training. This training includes policies and procedures of the CASA program, Department of Children's Services and Juvenile Court; dynamics of human behavior associated with child abuse and neglect; relevant local, state and federal laws; permanency planning and family preservation; cultural diversity; communication and interviewing skills; and the roles and responsibilities of the CASA volunteer. As part of their training, CASA Volunteer Advocates also observe court proceedings and shadow a more experienced volunteer when available.

CONTINUING EDUCATION TRAINING:

A CASA Volunteer Advocate completes a minimum of twelve hours of In-Service training each year, following their first year of service.

EXPECTATIONS:

- Talks with the child, interviews parents, family members, school officials, doctors, attorneys, psychologists and others involved with the child who might have facts about the case.
- Reviews all court documents and any records pertaining to the case.
- Prepares and submits confidential court reports to the Judge or Magistrate at each hearing.
- Monitors the case to assure that the child continues to move through "the system" as rapidly as is deemed appropriate to secure a safe, nurturing and permanent home for the child.
- Works to ensure that court-ordered services are provided to the child and the family.
- Submits Volunteer Monthly Reports at the beginning of each month documenting hours volunteered, miles driven, and In-Service attendance.